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the method as wholly satisfying in regard either to its conception or to its results.

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THE HOUSING QUESTION. By Alfred Smith, L. C. C., late Chairman of Housing Committee, London County Council. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Limited, 1900.

This little book deals in a thorough and sensible way with a question of urgent importance. The great and increasing evil of overcrowding is due to the lack of house-accommodation for working people within reach of their work and at rents which they can afford to pay. Mr. Smith shows the gravity of the present situation, and describes the attempts—legislative, administrative and philanthropic—which have been made in recent times to abate the evil. After all that has been done there is still an “utter want of proper dwellings,” and Mr. Smith sets to work to analyze the causes of this, with results that are very interesting. His book refers chiefly to London, but the situation is similar all over the country, and Mr. Smith's arguments are of general application.

He begins with some figures showing the growth of population in London during the century and the increasing number of persons living under conditions of overcrowding; and he reminds us of the connection of overcrowding with disease and drink, lunacy and crime. Then comes a summary of the legislation prior to the famous Royal Commission which sat from 1884 to 1889, and made an elaborate report as to the causes of overcrowding. The outcome of the recommendations of the Commission was the Housing Act of 1890. Mr. Smith deals fully with the provisions of this Act, and describes, as he is well able to do, the work of the London County Council under the Act during the last nine years in clearing and rebuilding insanitary areas, in building tenement and cottage dwellings, and in carrying out street improvements. The part played by the Artisans' Dwelling Companies and Trusts is also described and some interesting details are given of the Model Lodging Houses in London and Glasgow.

But Mr. Smith rightly insists that “the paramount necessity of to-day is increased accommodation,” and that “it is doubtful whether if all the slums of London were cleared away and replaced by healthy dwellings, the amount of house-room would be mater-

ially extended." The clearance of insanitary areas should be regarded rather as a necessity from the public health point of view than as a means of relieving overcrowding. The only possible relief of overcrowding appears to lie in providing a further supply of dwellings at reasonable rents in the suburban districts. If this is to be done it is essential that there should be greater facilities of transit. We must put further pressure on the Railway Companies to provide workmen's trains, and we must look for the extension and unification of the tramway system and the building of light railways. But Mr. Smith warns us that such increased facilities would not by themselves increase the supply of house-room. One-fifth of the land within the boundaries of the County of London is now vacant land—a fact which indicates that the crux of the housing difficulty lies in securing the utilization of vacant land, and that improved means of transit, although of the greatest importance, will not by themselves avail to solve the problem.

The question then has to be asked, "What hinders the utilization of land for building purposes?" Mr. Smith's answer is: "The reason is one quite apart from the question of facilities of communication, and one of a far more fundamental character—namely, the present system of levying local taxation." The last section of the book is headed "The Reform of Local Taxation—an Important Remedy," and it contains a striking argument that the levying of local taxation on the present rateable value of property impedes building enterprise.

According to Mr. Smith we ought to levy local taxation not on the present rateable value—*i. e.*, the value of the premises as a whole, land and buildings together, if occupied; but on the site value—*i. e.*, the value of the ground apart from anything in the way of buildings or improvements upon it, and the rate ought to be levied whether the land be occupied or not. The advantages of this change may be summarized as follows.

On the outskirts of growing neighborhoods we often see land which is suitable for building but which is left idle year by year. Under the present system of rating, such land is classed as agricultural and rated on that basis, at say £3 or £5 an acre, while it could be let for building at £50 or £100 an acre. But as soon as houses are built and occupied, the rateable value goes up suddenly a hundredfold—from £3 or £5 to £300 or £500 an acre. The underrating of the land before it is built on of course encourages owners to "hold it for the rise" longer

than they would if it were rated all the time at its real value; but it is also true that the crushing burden of rates which is imposed when the houses are built operates in itself to postpone and to prevent building. Our present rates immensely increase the cost of occupying the houses that are built, and effectually prevent more from being built; and it has become impossible for anyone—private builders, philanthropic companies, or public bodies—to provide houses for working people at reasonable rents. If land everywhere were rated on its real value whether built on or not, and if the erection of buildings did not make it liable to any increase of rates, there can be no doubt that we should have more and cheaper houses.

Mr. Smith proves quite clearly that the result of substituting site value for the present rateable value as the basis of local taxation would be a re-adjustment of the burden of local taxation as between different districts in such a way as to stimulate building enterprise. Heavier taxation would fall on the fully developed sites of the centre, while the outer districts would be relieved from the burden which now hampers their development. By way of illustration he takes the case of business premises in the West End of London. The rent is £1000 per annum. The structure represents an annual value of £150. The site therefore is producing £850 per annum. The taxes at present levied on the premises (at the rate of 25 per cent.) are £250 per annum, or about 30 per cent. on the annual value of the site. Compare this with the case of a small house in an outer district. The rent is £30 per annum. The structure represents an annual value of £25. The site value as paid in ground rent is £5. The taxes at the same rate on the house are £7 10s., or 150 per cent. on the annual value of the site as against 30 per cent. paid on the annual value of the West End site;—a burden five times as great.

The argument may be illustrated even more clearly perhaps by supposing the case of two properties, each of the present “rateable” value of say £100, one of them in a central position, the other on the outskirts. If we were to separate the £100 rateable value in the two cases into its component parts, we should find that the site value and the building value bore a different proportion to one another in the two cases. On the outskirts the site value would be say £20 and the building value £80. At the centre the site value would be £80 and the building value £20. At present both properties would be rated on the same value—£100. If site value were

substituted for "rateable" value for the purposes of local taxation, the central premises would pay on £80, and the suburban on only £20. The advantage of this change would be twofold. The increased burden would do no harm to the fully developed central site, which ought, indeed, equitably to bear it. So far from hindering such sites from being developed, the pressure of the site value rate would be salutary in securing that they should be properly utilized. On the other hand, by freeing sites on the outskirts from a burden which ought not to be imposed on them we should remove the main hindrance to suburban development and it would be possible for houses to be supplied steadily to meet the demand for them at reasonable prices.

This is Mr. Smith's argument as we understand it, and it deserves the serious consideration of everyone interested in the Housing Question.

CROMPTON LLEWELYN DAVIES.

LONDON.

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY. An Introduction to the Philosophical Study of Politics. By Alfred H. Lloyd, Author of "Citizenship and Salvation" and "Dynamic Idealism." Ann Arbor: George Wahr, Publisher, 1899.

Professor Lloyd conceives it to be the duty of the philosophy of history "to examine the fundamental data of history, the general facts or the general principles that every historian takes for granted or is very likely to take for granted, and in the examination to determine how far they are really and consistently thinkable" (p. 12). "Determine what time is, what an event in time is, what causation and individuality and progress are, and what society is, and universal history is bound to stand before you" (p. 13). And this universal history is of interest because the knowledge of its laws liberates the life of the present from the bondage of necessity. To know the laws of the life we live is to live that life spontaneously. Knowledge can turn a necessary result into a motive and "where motive and result are one, freedom need not be questioned" (p. 15). But to find the laws of our present life in the events of the past is to presuppose a unity of present and past. "Not those that are now gone once lived and we live, but they and we are living; they in us and we with them. When, looking over the past, we think of freedom or spontaneity or responsibility as